

just as each failure is a failure for all. When we unite on a human rights platform, whether domestically or internationally, above politics and political alliances, we create more enduring partnerships and relationships. When we pursue freedom and empowerment for others, we reaffirm and protect our own.

In my interaction with the other awardees present here today, it was evident that the passion we feel for our causes is driven by the love of our homelands and our people. That, in turn, drives our passion for what is right and what is just. Our people deserve nothing less. We all believe in striving for ideals that are—if I may borrow the words—self-evident; namely, the ideals of truth, justice, goodness, and universal love and understanding. Our stories are a testament to the universality of these ideals.

We are truly and deeply honored by this award, more so, when it comes from you, Madame Secretary, yourself a woman of courage, who has inspired women around the world to reach great heights. Your untiring efforts in championing women's rights worldwide are well known. Your immortal words that, "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights," resonate with all of us here.

We would also like to express our deep admiration for the First Lady Mrs. Obama, and we would also like to express our appreciation for your sharing this moment with us. Madame Secretary, on behalf of all the awardees, I thank you. And we accept the honor with humility and pride. Thank you. (Applause.)

Secretary Clinton: Thank you. These women of courage will serve to remind us every day as we do our work in this venerable building—here we are in the Benjamin Franklin Room, and I'm about to invite you to join our reception in the Thomas Jefferson Room—that our own country has a lot to live up to. But we derive inspiration from those who are struggling so hard just to realize the basic rights that we sometimes take for granted. And it is our responsibility not only to continue to do what we must here at home to realize the dream that America represents, but to use our talents and our abilities and resources to help others as well.

It is such a great privilege to be here with all of you, to be the Secretary of State at this moment of history in an administration represented by Mrs. Obama today, led by President Obama, who means so much already to so many around the world. Now, it's our job to realize the promise that that represents. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 12, 2009]

CLINTON REITERATES U.S. COMMITMENT TO 'ROBUST' RIGHTS AGENDA

(By Glenn Kessler)

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, under fire for some of her recent remarks on human rights, insisted yesterday that the Obama administration regards the issue at the same level as economics and international security.

"A mutual and collective commitment to human rights is [as] important to bettering our world as our efforts on security, global economics, energy, climate change and other pressing issues," Clinton told reporters after meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the State Department. She said she had raised with Yang the issue of Tibet and a resumption of a U.S.-China human rights dialogue.

"The Obama administration is absolutely committed to a robust, comprehensive human rights agenda," she said. "We're going to look for ways where we can be effective, where we can actually produce outcomes that will matter in the lives of people who are struggling for their rights to be full participants in their societies."

Last month, during her first trip as chief U.S. diplomat to Asia, Clinton provoked human rights activists by saying that pressing China on that issue "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis." On matters such as greater freedom for Tibetans, Clinton said, "We pretty much know what [Beijing is] going to say."

Then, while traveling in the Middle East last week, Clinton appeared to play down human rights issues in Egypt and Turkey that had been raised in recent State Department reports, earning her further criticism. "She has missed unique opportunities," said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), one of the leading congressional voices on human rights. Secretary of State Condoleezza "Rice started out strong and ended weak," he said. "But Secretary Clinton is starting out weak."

Human rights activists were further upset Tuesday by the State Department releasing a statement on Tibet in the name of spokesman Robert A. Wood, after Wood had announced hours earlier that it would be issued in Clinton's name, on the eve of her meeting with Yang. Foreign governments tend to give greater weight to statements issued in the name of the secretary of state or the president, rather than spokesmen or press secretaries.

Wood refused yesterday to discuss "internal deliberations" of the State Department and said: "The statement that we issued last night has the full weight of the secretary. It was cleared by the secretary, and it represents the secretary's views."

Department officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were discussing internal deliberations, said the original announcement was an error. They noted that State had never issued a statement on the anniversary of Tibet's failed uprising against Chinese rule but that on the 50th anniversary, Clinton wanted such a statement despite the awkward timing of the Yang meeting. The meeting was scheduled mostly to discuss planning for the April 2 Group of 20 summit, which will focus on the world economic crisis.

The statement was issued in Wood's name because Clinton decided to address the media herself after the session with Yang, officials said.

Some sources said a draft statement on Tibet was more detailed and explicit, urging, for instance, the release of Tibetan prisoners. But other officials disagreed, saying that those elements were not in the statement when it reached Clinton's office and that she personally strengthened parts of it. Wang is scheduled to meet today with President Obama at the White House, officials said yesterday.

SOMEbody ELSE'S MONEY

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Uncle Sam keeps giving away taxpayer money to businesses that claim they are too important to fail. Some of these irresponsible corporations helped bring on this economic crisis.

Our government seems to be just as irresponsible in the way that it spends America's money. AIG received \$85 billion in bailout money from our gra-

cious government, but the Feds put little or no restrictions on that money. So, AIG is giving \$165 million of that money in bonuses to its own employees. You know, those are the same people that put AIG in this economic turmoil.

To make matters worse, since \$85 billion wasn't enough, irresponsible Uncle Sam is promising to fork over \$30 billion more of somebody else's money to AIG. Now we learn AIG is sending some of that taxpayer money to Europe, including French banks.

Normally the government should not tell private businesses how to operate, but when 80 percent of the business is run by the government, as AIG is, the government has the duty to protect taxpayer money. Thus far, Uncle Sam has had a reckless disregard for the way it throws citizen money around.

And that's just the way it is.

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CONGRATULATING JACK YATES HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL TEAM

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate and congratulate my constituents' Jack Yates High School basketball team that won the State of Texas' championship.

It is important to emphasize when young people are committed to excellence, and I want to congratulate this school for never giving up, never giving out, and never giving in, as I have heard so often from my good friend and colleague.

It is important to note that this school was challenged to be closed some 3 years ago. But yet not only have they excelled academically, they excelled on the basketball court, having lost some of their star players in the last school year.

Congratulations to their great coach. Congratulations to those students who were persevering. And isn't it exciting to win their first championship since the 1940s?

Go Jack Yates, a great basketball team. We're excited, and we are proud of you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain Special Order speeches without prejudice to the possible resumption of legislative business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.